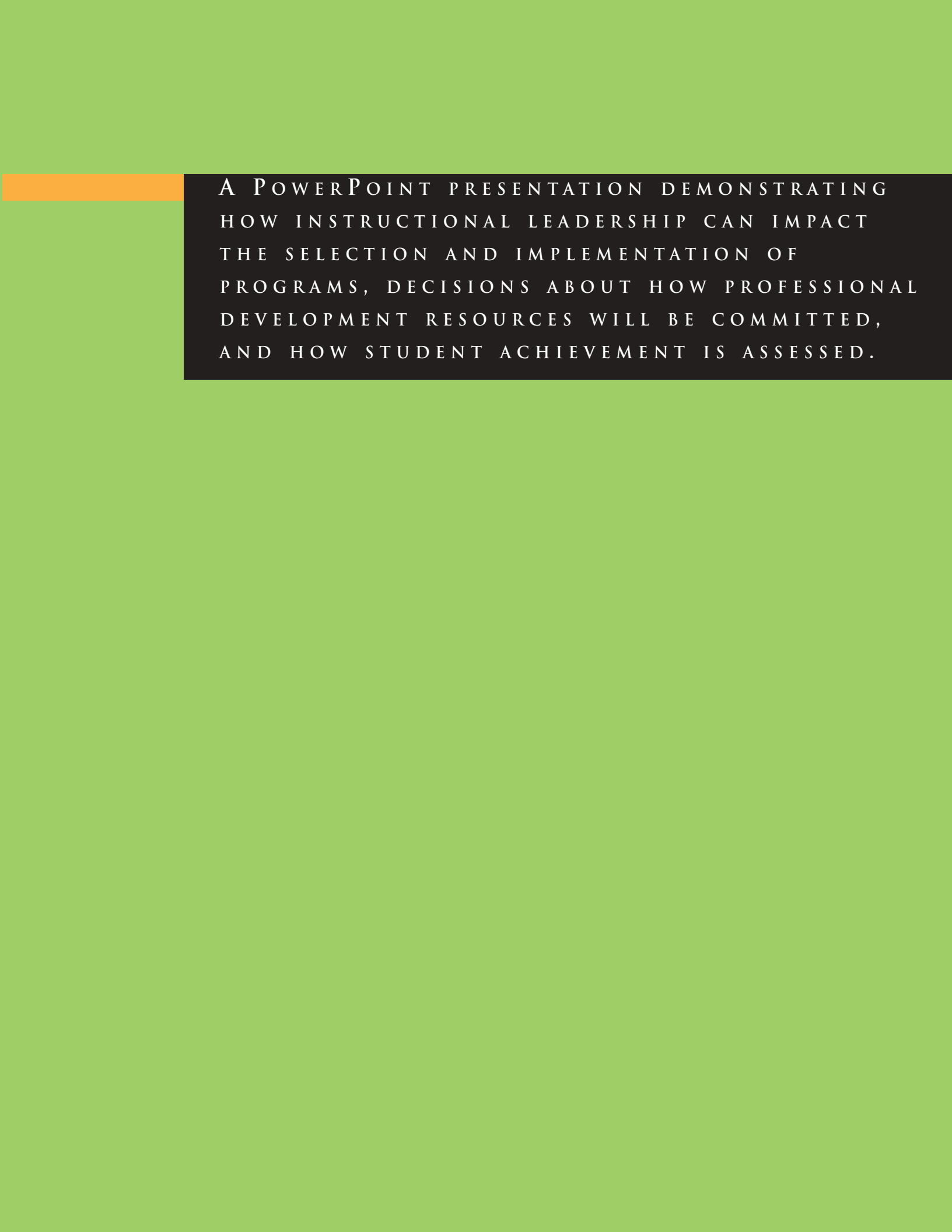# INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

IF SOME SCHOOLS CAN TEACH THEIR KIDS TO READ ON GRADE LEVEL, WHY CAN'T ALL SCHOOLS IN A DISTRICT DO IT? EFFECTIVE, INFORMED, COMMITTED LEADERSHIP PROVIDES A COHERENT, CONSISTENT VISION OF READING EDUCATION FOR STATES, DISTRICTS, AND SCHOOLS, BASED ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

THIS SECTION OF THE GUIDEBOOK INCLUDES:

A PowerPoint presentation demonstrating how instructional leadership can impact the selection and implementation of programs, decisions about how professional development resources will be committed, and how student achievement is assessed.

A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION DEMONSTRATING HOW INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAN IMPACT THE SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS, DECISIONS ABOUT HOW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES WILL BE COMMITTED, AND HOW STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IS ASSESSED.

READING FIRST

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● All too often this is the picture we see at a district level: one or two successful schools surrounded by less successful schools. So the obvious question an instructional leader should ask is this:
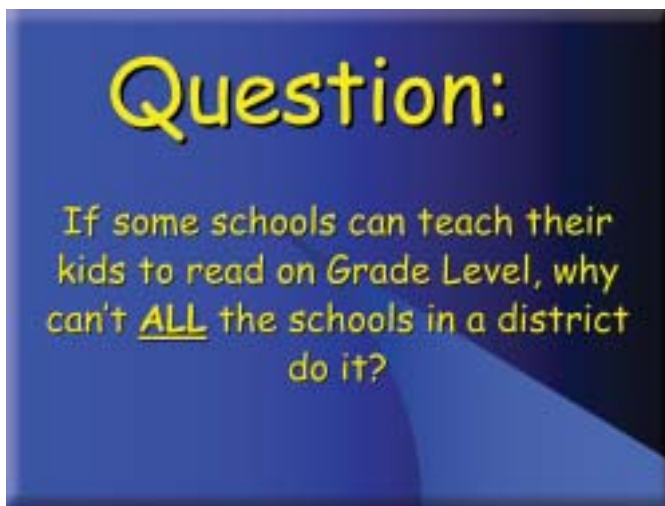
● Investigators identified three school districts in which educational leaders not only asked this question but took action. These districts subsequently set up systems to PREVENT students from falling below grade level and to PROMOTE grade-level reading.
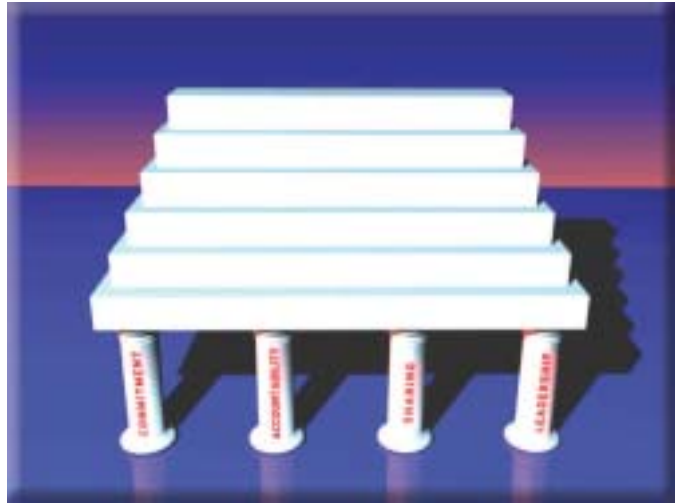
Instructional Leadership

So what can we learn from these three case studies?

First, four pillars are the foundation for these districts' successes.
This foundation supports everything they do:
● Commitment
● Accountability
● Sharing
● Leadership

● Teachers use assessment data to determine the effectiveness of their instruction, and as the basis for making needed changes for students who are not making sufficient progress.
● Principals check assessment data from all classrooms as a basis for providing extra help to teachers who have a large number of struggling students.
● District administrators examine data from all schools and, when necessary, are able to provide extra help to principals, teachers, and students.

Accountability

Definition
Using assessment data to improve reading instruction

Examples
Teachers use assessment data to help their students learn.

Principals use assessment data to help teachers teach.

Superintendents use assessment data to help principals become instructional leaders.

In these districts, the focus is on reading achievement above all else.

How do they do it?
In many ways.
● For example, administrators use funding from a variety of sources (school budgets, Title I, and ESL funds) to, for example, purchase comprehensive reading programs, support regular staff development, pay the salaries of reading coaches, and provide extra instructional time for students reading far below grade level.

Commitment

Definition
Resolving that all students will learn to read

Example
Focusing on reading achievement above all else.

Utilizing funding from diverse sources to fully support program implementation with materials, coaches, and staff development.

Sharing

Definition

Bringing educators together to learn from each other

Examples

Teachers meet regularly to share "what works."

Reading coaches meet regularly to share "what works."

Principals learn from other principals in the district's schools.

- The importance of educators learning from each other's successes cannot be overemphasized.
- On the other hand the "wheels of assistance" (For ex.-- staff development, conferences, study groups) must be consistent with districts' approach to reading instruction.

Leadership

Definition

Maintaining a clarity of focus on reading, and working to bring about significant improvements in reading instruction

Examples

District superintendents provide principals with the resources to support improvement.

Principals visit classrooms frequently and protect reading instructional time from interruptions.

- Leaders not only clarify the focus, but when necessary, keep returning to the focus.
- Superintendents not only provide resources but follow up on how these resources are used to improve education.
- Superintendents and principals remove barriers, so that teachers and their students can maintain their focus on reading.
- Principals spend a lot of time in classrooms, observing students' reading performance. They make sure that teachers are getting the professional development and support that they need.

Lorene Villareal, Los Fresnos:

"When you have someone who truly has a vision and is truly leading the district, all your campuses should do well. And I would have to wonder about those districts where there are only a few campuses doing well. My question would be why?...

...Why haven't you gone down to those successful campuses and found out what they are doing...so that everyone can be doing it. And the superintendent is the one who is in a position to say everyone will do what these successful schools are doing."

As stated, the four pillars form the foundation of these school districts.

- To build on this foundation, these 3 districts followed plans that involved six similar steps.
- These six steps provide a guide for planning and implementing reading programs in Reading First schools.

- Districts evaluate research based comprehensive reading programs.
- Districts provide teachers with the essential instructional materials that go with the comprehensive reading program.
- Reading coaches and teachers take part in initial and on-going staff development that focuses on the foundation concepts of learning to read and the use of the selected comprehensive reading program.
- Reading coaches meet to learn about and discuss staff development and coaching techniques
- Administrators and principals make plans for assessments and other forms of progress monitoring.

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1. Fully implement a comprehensive research-based reading program

- Make sure the reading program is comprehensive and research-based.

- Deliver the program materials to every K-3 classroom.

- Fund and schedule staff development for administrators, reading coaches, and teachers.

- It is essential, however, that the district provide teachers with the essential instructional materials that go with the comprehensive reading program.
- Teachers take part in initial and ongoing staff development that focuses on the foundation concepts of learning to read and the use of the selected comprehensive reading program.

- Schedule adequate time (1.5 to 2.5 hrs) each day for reading instruction.

- Identify assessments for the beginning, middle, and end of school year.

- Reading coaches teach demonstration lessons, provide staff development, and help teachers figure out remedies for struggling readers. They also help struggling teachers in the implementation of a new comprehensive reading program.
- Outside educational consultants can be used in the beginning for staff development.

 It is essential that the district develop its own cadre of staff developers and reading coaches.

Six Steps to Success in Reading First Schools

1. Fully implement a research-based program

2. Create a timeline

Instructional Leadership

● More ambitious goals can be set for many students.

2. Create a timeline

Create a timeline for each grade in Reading First schools. Include specific goals that all students--including at-risk students--must attain during the year.

The goals on the timeline are designed to produce grade level achievement for at-risk students at the end of the school year.

● This district timeline has goals for the middle of the school year.

All teachers in every Reading First school in the district work to have their at-risk students reach the established goals by the dates specified on the timeline

Jan.   Feb.   Mar.
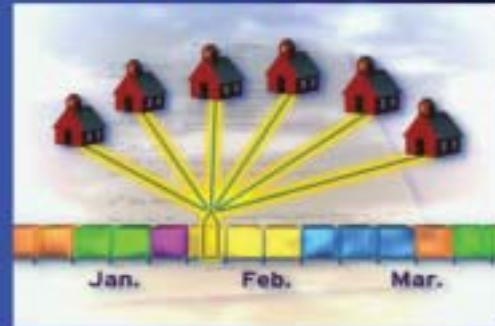
● The same timeline has goals for late in the school year.

"We want to make sure that it doesn't matter where you live, you're going to get the same education." --Lorene Villareal, Acting Superintendent, Los Fresnos, TX

Mar.   Apr.   May.

Some examples of goals for the end of the year

IN KINDERGARTEN:
students know the letters and sounds of the alphabet, can segment and blend sounds, and can sound out regular words in simple sentences.

IN FIRST GRADE:
students read grade level texts at a rate of 50 to 60 words per minute with comprehension and with no more than 3 errors per hundred words.

Six Steps to Success in Reading First Schools

1. Fully implement a research-based program
2. Create a timeline
3. Regularly evaluate student progress

3. Regularly evaluate student progress

Use instruction-based assessments to help determine if the goals on the timeline are being reached.

The three districts administer assessments on different schedules.
Every 6-8 weeks (Inglewood)
3 times a year (Los Fresnos)
Every 5 lessons (RITE program)

Lorene Villareal, Acting Superintendent, Los Fresnos, TX:

"If we waited until the end of the year to find out that our program was not working, it would be too late for many of our children... So, we assess the children in early fall and then again in early winter and then in the spring... we write tests to assess the skills that are on that timeline."

Six Steps to Success

1. Fully implement a research-based curriculum
2. Create a timeline
3. Regularly evaluate student progress
4. **Analyze the data**

4. Analyze Data

Superintendents, principals and teachers place high value on data.

They analyze, chart, and share data within the school and across the district.

They use data from the classroom-based instructional assessments to determine where help is needed, but not to blame struggling teachers and students.

Marge Thompson, retired principal of Kelso School in Inglewood:

"When Inglewood dramatically turned around was when the superintendent started analyzing the data. Then the coaches knew it, the principals knew it, everyone knew it. And it gave everyone the signal: this is important information that must be used."

- They came up with a clever way of displaying test data so that, at a glance, teachers and administrators can see how a class is doing.
- Green indicates a score that shows student mastery, yellow a score that shows some student difficulty and pink a score that indicates the students have serious problems in that area.

- In Inglewood, they found that simply collecting data was not helpful. To be helpful the data had to be analyzed and shared.
- This is a struggling class.

Instructional Leadership

● This class is doing very well.

5. Intervene Immediately

Help struggling students

Help teachers become more expert reading teachers

- Data reports and teacher observations are used to help determine which students are struggling. Intervention occurs immediately.

Help struggling students

Some administrators talk about three levels of intervention:

- The classroom teacher
  - May re-teach certain lessons and then reassess the students' progress
  - May regroup the students to maximize instructional effectiveness.
- Tutoring or other forms of individual instruction are added to the students' schedules.
- Intensive teaching that accelerates student progress is provided. This may take place outside of the regular school day.

Help struggling students

- Provide extra instructional time.
- Ensure that the content of the extra instruction time is aligned with the reading program used in the classroom.
- Use flexible grouping.

- These three districts act immediately to help struggling students.
- They all provide more instructional time for struggling students and align the content of that instruction with that of the comprehensive reading program used in the classroom.

Help teachers become more expert

- Provide extra professional development time.

- Provide more in-class help and coaching.

- Arrange for visits to other classrooms.

Six Steps to Success

1. Fully implement a research-based program
2. Create a timeline
3. Regularly evaluate student progress
4. Analyze the data
5. Intervene immediately

6. Validate, recalibrate, and celebrate

- External tests provide information on how students compare to students in other schools and other districts.
- Internal tests provide information about how the students are learning and progressing in the comprehensive reading program
- At the end of the year, the district validates and recalibrates its reading program, and its classroom based instructional assessments and celebrates its achievements with teachers, students, and their parents.

6. Validate and Recalibrate

- Analyze students' performance on both internal and external tests.

- Use the information to decide on changes for the up-coming year.

  What must be changed? Make a plan.

  What can be improved? Make a plan.

Some problems to overcome during the first year in Reading First schools

Problem 1.
Many second and third graders are struggling readers.

Solutions:
Provide significant amounts of extra instructional time with flexible grouping to allow students to make accelerated progress.

Prepare second and third grade teachers successfully to teach struggling readers.

- Provide significant amounts of extra instructional time with flexible grouping to allow students to make accelerated progress. Include time during the school day, after the school day, on Saturdays, and during vacations and summer.

Problem 2.
A shortage of experienced reading coaches.

Solutions:
Select new reading coaches who have good classroom management and communication skills.

Provide reading coaches with intensive on-going staff development on the comprehensive reading program used in the Reading First schools and on the principles of research-based reading instruction.

Arrange for teachers and coaches to visit exemplary schools.

- Begin staff development for coaches on the comprehensive reading program used in the Reading First schools in advance of when teachers begin using the program.
- If reading coaches are not highly experienced with the comprehensive program being used in the Reading First schools, provide extra time for staff development for teachers. In addition, provide opportunities for teachers to visit classrooms in which teachers are successfully implementing the program.

Problem 3.
Districts do not have a strong reading component in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten to prevent reading failure in later grades.

Solutions:
Introduce strong reading program in pre-kindergarten classes.

Provide additional language and reading instruction for kindergarten children who are behind.

● Here in one picture--the four pillars and the six steps that are the key to reading success.

SUCCESS
Validate and recalibrate
Intervene immediately
Analyze the data
Evaluate progress
Create a timeline
Fully implement a research-based curriculum

● What can state education agencies do to help? Here are some ways in which they can help support the four instructional pillars that underpin reform.

How state education agencies can support improvements in reading

How to support Commitment

- Be the torchbearer for improved reading instruction.

- Encourage utilization of funding from multiple sources to fully support implementation of a research based comprehensive program.

How to support Accountability

- Report data in useful fashion.
- Help districts select reading assessments.
- Help districts establish specific goals for all students.
- Shine a spotlight on schools and districts with high reading achievement for at-risk students.

How to support Sharing

Provide districts with information about scientifically-based comprehensive reading programs, and classroom-based instructional assessments.

- State Departments of Education can provide this kind of information at summer institutes, at meetings held at colleges and universities, and at regional state meetings of professional organizations.
- They can identify and support model schools.
- They can organize a series of leadership meetings for principals.
- They can work with colleges and universities to align pre-service curricula with the goals of Reading First.
- They can seek support from the business community and parent groups.

Instructional Leadership

How to support Leadership

Ensure that state level policies and actions support implementation of research-based reading programs, professional development, and classroom-based assessment.

This is the question which starts everything.

● Unless an instructional leader has the vision to ask this question, then there may not be sufficient motivation for educators in the district to change.

Question:

If some schools can teach their kids to read on Grade Level, why can't ALL the schools in a district do it?